

National Museum of the Pacific War

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Guy Lary

503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team, Pacific War, World War II

Date of Interview: February 27, 2004

National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with Guy Lary
503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team, Pacific War, World War II

Mr. Smith: This is February 27, 2004. I'm interviewing Mr. Guy Lary. We're in the room provided by the Sunday House Motel for the interviewing of the 503 personnel. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife for the preservation of historical information related to this site. My name is Ned Smith.

Guy, where and when were you born?

Mr. Lary: 3/23/25. I was born in Dunlap, Iowa.

Mr. Smith: What were the names of your parents?

Mr. Lary: My dad's name was Charles Lary and my mother's name was Lena.

Mr. Smith: What was her maiden name?

Mr. Lary: Wadsworth.

Mr. Smith: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Lary: I had five brothers and two sisters. They've all passed away now but one brother.

Mr. Smith: Were any of the other brothers in the military?

Mr. Lary: All of them. All the boys were in the service.

Mr. Smith: How about your sisters?

Mr. Lary: No, they were too old by then.

Mr. Smith: Where did you go to school?

Mr. Lary: Dunlap, Iowa, is where I went to school.

Mr. Smith: When and where did you enlist in the military?

Mr. Lary: Logan, Iowa, was the county seat. Went down to, at that time they called it Ft. Crook, in Nebraska. Since then it's changed names.

Mr. Smith: Why did you pick the Army?

Mr. Lary: All my other brothers were in the Army. So, I picked it.

Mr. Smith: Sort of a family affair.

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Where did you do your training? Where did they send you?

Mr. Lary: I went to Camp Fannin, Texas, and then seventeen weeks of basic training. Then I joined the paratroops and went to Ft. Benning, Georgia.

Mr. Smith: Let's back up a little bit. When you enlisted, what was the date? What time frame?

Mr. Lary: It was August 21, 1943.

Mr. Smith: Okay, 1943. Then you came down to Texas and how long were you there?

Mr. Lary: Just seventeen weeks.

Mr. Smith: Then to Ft. Benning?

Mr. Lary: Ft. Benning, yes. Seven weeks.

Mr. Smith: How long?

Mr. Lary: After Ft. Benning and jump training, I took three weeks' of communication. Then I had seven days' furlough coming. They sent me home for seven days. Then I went right overseas.

Mr. Smith: You were a private all this time?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: On your practice jumps and so forth, anything outstanding stick in your mind?

Mr. Lary: I was one of the lucky ones. I thought that the night jump was really the greatest jump I ever made because we jumped higher.

Mr. Smith: Would you take some night jump practices from the towers before you jumped from planes?

Mr. Lary: Yes, we did.

Mr. Smith: But you're talking about the jump from the plane, I presume?

Mr. Lary: Yes, the last jump, the fifth jump was a night jump.

Mr. Smith: Was the altitude any different in the night jump?

Mr. Lary: On the night jump we jumped about three or four thousand feet higher. It was much nicer.

Mr. Smith: Had quite a ride down then?

Mr. Lary: Yes, it's quick because you fall fast.

Mr. Smith: From Ft. Benning then where did you go?

Mr. Lary: I went to California to Camp Stoneman. From Camp Stoneman they sent me right overseas as a replacement to the 503. That was in New Guinea.

Mr. Smith: From Stoneman you went to New Guinea or did you go to Australia first?

Mr. Lary: No, I did not. They'd already left Australia.

Mr. Smith: You went directly to New Guinea?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: What was the ship like that you went over on?

Mr. Lary: It was really great. It was what they called a victory ship. It had seven thousand troops on it.

Mr. Smith: In there like sardines then, huh?

Mr. Lary: Yes. You ate twice a day.

Mr. Smith: Was the chow pretty good?

Mr. Lary: Oh, yes. It was good food. Good trip over. We were all by ourselves. Every three minutes the thing changed courses.

Mr. Smith: Yes, the zig-zag. Where did you land in New Guinea?

Mr. Lary: Oro Bay.

Mr. Smith: Where was the unit at that time?

Mr. Lary: They had already jumped in Dutch New Guinea.

Mr. Smith: Where did you join them? Where did you go?

Mr. Lary: I joined them up there at Dutch New Guinea. We were the rear echelon so we moved everything up there.

Mr. Smith: How long were you stationed there?

Mr. Lary: Probably two or three months at the most.

Mr. Smith: Did you do any jumping there?

Mr. Lary: No.

Mr. Smith: No training or practice jumps?

Mr. Lary: Just training.

Mr. Smith: But no practice jumps?

Mr. Lary: No, no more jumps.

Mr. Smith: From there where were you sent?

Mr. Lary: I went to Leyte first. We were supposed to fight there but we just went there and based for thirty days.

Mr. Smith: They sent you up there by boat?

Mr. Lary: They took us by boat.

Mr. Smith: You had just a temporary base?

Mr. Lary: Yes, temporary base.

Mr. Smith: From there what happened?

Mr. Lary: From there we went to Mindoro.

Mr. Smith: Did you jump there?

Mr. Lary: No, we went in on the ships. We made the initial landing there.

Mr. Smith: Was that a pretty exciting situation?

Mr. Lary: Not really. The Japs all left when they found out the Americans were landing.

Mr. Smith: Is that right?

Mr. Lary: Yes. We just had a few of them on the other end.

Mr. Smith: But most of them turned tail?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: I'll be darn. Once you secured the place, then what happened?

Mr. Lary: Then we got ready and we jumped on Corregidor.

Mr. Smith: The next was—

Mr. Lary: We got ready and we jumped on Corregidor. We did a little training there to stay in shape.

Mr. Smith: Do you remember the final jump when you went into action?

Mr. Lary: Oh, yes.

Mr. Smith: Do you want to explain that or tell us a little bit about it?

Mr. Lary: The first went over at nine o'clock in the morning, between nine and ten. Then we jumped over there about noon. They were kind of expecting us but we landed right on the top. The only thing exciting about that is we got shot in the plane. Our plane got hit.

Mr. Smith: Is that right?

Mr. Lary: Our mailman didn't jump and another guy didn't jump because their chutes got shot in the back. It wouldn't go clear through the chute on account of being so tough.

Mr. Smith: I'll be darn. The plane didn't go down though, is that right?

Mr. Lary: No, no.

Mr. Smith: It was just a couple of the guys that were (?). How about your landing? Did you land in a pretty good spot?

Mr. Lary: I landed real good but there were a lot of them that landed in the cliffs up there.

We lost a lot of guys.

Mr. Smith: I've heard that.

Mr. Lary: But I was one of the lucky few. All three of the sticks that jumped out of our plane landed on the Topside.

Mr. Smith: Do you remember what was the altitude that you jumped from about?

Mr. Lary: About five hundred feet.

Mr. Smith: Five hundred. You didn't have much time to count going down.

Mr. Lary: No, but we didn't land on the water.

Mr. Smith: Once you're on the ground do you remember how you got together?

Mr. Lary: Yes, we all had prearranged signals. Soon as we hit the ground we were to get close enough together to talk. From there we went to where we were supposed to go.

Mr. Smith: You jumped with your weapon, is that correct?

Mr. Lary: Oh, yes.

Mr. Smith: Had it right with you then once you were on the ground. You jumped with a weapon and you jumped with a Mae West in case you hit the water.

Mr. Lary: Right.

Mr. Smith: Once you got your group together then what happened?

Mr. Lary: We were lucky we were on top. Of course, we started fighting as soon as we got there. It was a tough seventeen days, I'll say that much. That's how long we were there.

Mr. Smith: Seventeen days?

Mr. Lary: Seventeen days.

Mr. Smith: How about sleeping and eating? Did you get to eat once in a while?

Mr. Lary: You ate when you got a chance.

Mr. Smith: When it was quiet?

Mr. Lary: You'd sleep in the daytime if you could. At night, the Japs kept you awake most of the night.

Mr. Smith: What sort of cover did you have? Was it warm enough at night?

Mr. Lary: Yes, we had khakis and we had a light jacket on.

Mr. Smith: Did you have a poncho?

Mr. Lary: We covered up just with our blanket. We had a poncho but we covered up with our blanket.

Mr. Smith: You did have a blanket with you then?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Do you remember during the seventeen days did you get much sleep?

Mr. Lary; Not much.

Mr. Smith: Not much, right. How about food? Did you get enough to survive?

Mr. Lary: You got K-rations which wasn't too bad. You could live on them.

Mr. Smith: Did you loose any weight in that seventeen days, you think?

Mr. Lary: Probably. I probably lost fifteen pounds.

Mr. Smith: That much. Do you think most of the fellows did?

Mr. Lary: I think so, yes. Everyday we'd go out and take that land and everyday we had to come back because we couldn't hold it.

Mr. Smith: It was back and forth. What finally broke the Japanese do you think?

Mr. Lary: We finally got them cornered down in one corner and in the caves where they couldn't get out. They blasted the caves shut. They used flame throwers, too.

Mr. Smith: How about numbers of troops, did you guys outnumber them?

Mr. Lary: They outnumbered us about seven or eight to one.

Mr. Smith: Is that correct? So you guys just by fierce fighting defeated them.

Mr. Lary: We had better weapons. They did have some air support in there.

Mr. Smith: Did you have an advantage of a surprise at all or not?

Mr. Lary: No.

Mr. Smith: They knew you were coming?

Mr. Lary: They knew we were coming. They even hollered and told us we were coming.

Mr. Smith: I'll be darn.

Mr. Lary: They were giving Roosevelt hell. They told us we ought to go back and take care of Roosevelt.

Mr. Smith: Once the island was secured then what happened to you?

Mr. Lary: They took us back to Mindoro again.

Mr. Smith: How long then before they put you back in a fighting area somewhere?

Mr. Lary: They took us right back out. In about twenty days, I think, they took us over to Negros Island and we were fighting over there.

Mr. Smith: At Mindoro you were just recuperating and getting your gear in shape.

Mr. Lary: And getting guys back that were able to fight again. Some of them got sent home.

Mr. Smith: Did you have any particular buddy during this period of time that you were pretty close with?

Mr. Lary: I think the first day there, our squad leader, we called him Jughead, (*name ?*), he got killed. The second day the BAR man got hit in the butt carrying a stretcher. After that I was the BAR man the rest of the trip.

Mr. Smith: That's that heavy gun.

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Did you like the weapon?

Mr. Lary: It was a good gun.

Mr. Smith: Good gun but just pretty heavy to carry around.

Mr. Lary: We didn't do that much moving around.

Mr. Smith: You had the tripod?

Mr. Lary: No, we took it off. We didn't use it.

Mr. Smith: Didn't use the tripod. So, you had to hold it up when you were firing.

Mr. Lary: Yes, or rest it on something.

Mr. Smith: From Mindoro where did you go then?

Mr. Lary: We went to Negros and we fought over there. That's what happened when the war was over; we were over in Negros.

Mr. Smith: Had you secured the island by that time or not?

Mr. Lary: No.

Mr. Smith: You were still fighting?

Mr. Lary: We were still fighting.

Mr. Smith: Did the Japs there have to surrender to you people after the war?

Mr. Lary: We called them in on loudspeakers.

Mr. Smith: Did you have to tell them the war was over?

Mr. Lary: Yes. They didn't believe it.

Mr. Smith: I'm sure of that for several days.

Mr. Lary: Of course, I missed right at the end of it because they sent me back. They ran over me with a Caterpillar. Cat widening the road out. I'd built my bunker up. We'd built our bunker there and I was in the bunker and they ran over it.

Mr. Smith: Is that right?

Mr. Lary: They sent me back to Leyte so I missed the rest of the war.

Mr. Smith: How bad did it injure you?

Mr. Lary: Just my back.

Mr. Smith: You were back in the hospital then?

Mr. Lary: At Leyte. Then the war was over when I joined the outfit. I went back to Negros Island and we were taking prisoners there.

Mr. Smith: When you rejoined?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: How long were you in the hospital? Very long?

Mr. Lary: Probably about six weeks.

Mr. Smith: Oh, that long.

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Had you pretty well healed up by that time?

Mr. Lary: Oh, yes. I didn't really get hurt; it just hurt my back. When you hurt your back you hurt all over.

Mr. Smith: A Cat is a pretty heavy piece of equipment. What protected you from really getting squashed?

Mr. Lary: We had logs over it. About so big around, probably about seventeen inches.

Mr. Smith: So they held it up pretty much.

Mr. Lary: Yes, and we had built a roof on it and put dirt on it. There were four of us in there but not when the Cat went over. I was the only one in there.

Mr. Smith: You were the only one there. I'll be darn. Luck of the draw, huh?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Then you went back to Negros and this is after the surrender, is that correct?

Mr. Lary: After the surrender, right.

Mr. Smith: What were duties at this time? What were you doing?

Mr. Lary: All we did then was just calling the Japs in. Of course, they had to have guards all around. We had them in a big sawmill.

Mr. Smith: You take them as POWs?

Mr. Lary: Yes. They had to be watched pretty close. They had a lot of fleas.

Mr. Smith: In bad shape?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Did you shoot them with sulfa and that sort of thing?

Mr. Lary: We didn't do that; the medics did. Our medics were real good about taking care of them. Even though they were afraid to get fleas from them and all that other stuff that you normally catch.

Mr. Smith: How long did this go on before you were moved out?

Mr. Lary: It didn't take long. I think we were all done there in about five weeks. Then they got the outfit ready to come home. They sent the outfit home as a unit. I should have gone home but they got my points mixed up and I went to Japan for four weeks. That was interesting anyway.

Mr. Smith: Tell us a little bit about the duty there in Japan.

Mr. Lary: I had my points made and I said, "I've got sixty-five points and I should have gone home with the outfit." They didn't believe me at first because I was a young kid. I was in and out of the service before I was twenty-one. Finally, they got to looking at the points and after two weeks they said, "Well, you get to loaf for two weeks. Soon as we get a ship in here that we can send you home on, you can go home."

Mr. Smith: Let's back up a little bit. When you enlisted how old were you?

Mr. Lary: I was eighteen in March.

Mr. Smith: You were in about three years.

Mr. Lary: I was in twenty-nine months and twenty-six days.

Mr. Smith: So, you weren't yet twenty-one.

Mr. Lary: I got out before I was twenty-one.

Mr. Smith: Where were you mustered out?

Mr. Lary: They sent me to Ft. Levenworth.

Mr. Smith: That was not too far from your home.

Mr. Lary: Not too far from home, yes.

Mr. Smith: What happened then?

Mr. Lary: After the service, I went to work. I had a couple of jobs. Then there were short jobs and there were strikes. I worked for a packing house. Then in a truck outfit putting on truck bodies and it was temporary. Finally, in 1948, I got on the GI Bill and I learned to do body work.

Mr. Smith: You did what?

Mr. Lary: Learned how to do body work. Body mechanic. I did that until I retired, until I got hurt in '81.

Mr. Smith: How long was your training in school?

Mr. Lary: I was two years training, on-the-job training.

Mr. Smith: This was all on the GI Bill?

Mr. Lary: Yes.

Mr. Smith: What outfit did you work for?

Mr. Lary: I worked for Ford Mercury. I worked for Mercury Lincoln to start with. Then I worked for different body shops. I moved to Des Moines from Council Bluffs and I went to work there for a Ford dealership. I worked there until I retired. I got disability retirement.

Mr. Smith: This was from Ford, from the company or from an individual dealer?

Mr. Lary: No, I got disability retirement because I got hurt.

Mr. Smith: But this is from the Ford Company?

Mr. Lary: No, I got Social Security.

Mr. Smith: You didn't get any company—

Mr. Lary: From the union I get a small pension. Around \$150 a month which is pretty nice.

Mr. Smith: What were your feelings when you mustered out and got home? I'm sure you

were happy.

Mr. Lary: I was happy but, you know, there were so many people running the streets that didn't have work that it kind of scared me. I worked four or five short jobs before I could get into body work.

Mr. Smith: Right, get something that you could stay with.

Mr. Lary: I knew it was hard work but I thought it was much better than just jumping around from job to job every year.

Mr. Smith: Did you notice anything different in the States once you got back from the time you'd gone overseas, other than you said there was unemployment?

Mr. Lary: I think at that time people were really behind the president and behind the war. I was really happy for that.

Mr. Smith: It was a little different from you coming back and the Vietnam boys.

Mr. Lary: Oh, yes. That was tragic.

Mr. Smith: Do you have any recollections of any of your officers, your commanding officer or any of the others?

Mr. Lary: Yes, Bill Bailey was my company commander. Lieutenant Flash, I've talked to him since I've been here. He's down in Texas here. Bill Calhoun was 1st platoon in F Company where I was at. There are three officers that I had.

Mr. Smith: Were they pretty good, do you figure?

Mr. Lary: Oh, yes. They were very good.

Mr. Smith: Were any of them West Point products?

Mr. Lary: I don't think any of them were. I think they all were regular-

Mr. Smith: Came through OCS.

Mr. Lary: Bill Bailey went on to be a medical doctor. Bill Calhoun went on to be a dentist.

Mr. Smith: Can you think of anything else that sticks in your mind?

Mr. Lary: Over the years it's been great getting together with them. I didn't know it for almost fifteen years that they were having meetings once or twice a year. I finally got to going to them and it's been great. We've lost a lot of good men over time.

Mr. Smith: You understand this tape will be transcribed. They will send you a copy of the transcription. Then you can make any changes or additions or whatever you want to do. Then you send it back and then the final product is going to be in the archives of the museum. There will be a special study area for World War II. All of the oral histories will be in there. Hopefully some day some young buck is going to pick up your tape. Can you think of anything in particular you'd like to tell this young guy about your experiences?

Mr. Lary: I hope that for the kids in the age coming up that the end of the wars will finally come. I just doubt it. In my time and in my son's time I doubt if it will ever. We'll always have wars, I think.

Mr. Smith: On the other hand, the fellowship and camaraderie of your group—

Mr. Lary: Oh, yes. And even now I bring my son down to the group. Now, this year they didn't. They're coming this fall. I'll go to the National and he's going to be with me this fall.

Mr. Smith: Great. Where will the National be held?

Mr. Lary: This year it's going to be held in Laughlin. It's held in a different place all the time just like this Southwest Chapter. It should be a good time for all. At National we have a little bigger group there.

Mr. Smith: Guy, on behalf of the museum let me thank you very much for taking the time to give us this oral history.

Mr. Lary: I hope that a lot of young guys hear it sometime in the future and will do them some good.

Mr. Smith: I'm sure you would concur that war is hell and you hope they don't have to go.

Mr. Lary: No, I hope they don't have to go.

Mr. Smith: Thanks again, Guy.

Mr. Lary: Thank you.

Proof

Bonnie Day Rush
April 28, 2010
Dublin, Texas

Tape 1075